

# **THE ALEXSAN KOPANO RESOURCE CENTRE: AN EVALUATION**

**RESEARCHED FOR  
THE ALEXSAN KOPANO CENTRE**

**BY THE  
COMMUNITY AGENCY FOR SOCIAL ENQUIRY**

**JULY 1999**



**Published by:** The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (C A S E)

PO Box 32882

Braamfontein

2017

Telephone: +27 (11) 646 5922

Fax: +27 (11) 646 5919

e-mail: [director@case.org.za](mailto:director@case.org.za)

Web site address: <http://www.case.org.za>

© **Alexsan Kopano Centre**

**Researched for:** Alexsan Kopano Centre

**ISBN:**



**Siysanga Giyose**

**Ran Greenstein**

# Evaluation of the Alexsan Resource Centre by C A S E

## Introduction

The Community Agency for Social Enquiry (C A S E) was commissioned by the Alexsan Resource Centre to perform an evaluation of the services and activities provided by and at the Centre. The overall aim of the evaluation was to:

- Examine users' perspectives on the current services provided by and at the Centre;
- Establish users' needs and concerns with regard to services and facilities, and preferences for specific services that should be made available at the Centre;
- Probe users' views on how the Centre can be made more viable through payment for services or other contributions by the community;
- Provide recommendations on how to meet the concerns expressed by the users.

The Alexsan Resource Centre is a project of the Alexsan Kopano Educational Trust. Its objective is to organise and implement initiatives to meet the development and welfare needs of the Alexandra community. Some of the services offered by the Centre to realise this goal include career guidance, computer training, a library, lifeline counselling, a youth office, and the provision of other facilities.

## Methodology

The methodology used to elicit the required information was developed by C A S E in consultation with the Alexsan Centre. Five focus groups, recruited according to age, were held with users of the Centre. Table 1 underneath gives the composition of the focus groups:

Number	Gender	Age
10	Males and Females	12–17
10	Females	18–24
10	Males	18–24
10	Males and Females	25–34
10	Males and Females	60 years and above

## Activities Provided by the Centre

Focus group participants were asked to mention activities that were currently provided by the Alexsan Resource Centre. It was not surprising to find that the youngest age group, 12–17 years, mentioned the least number of facilities: the library, the clinic and Eskom for the purchase of electricity units. These were the facilities most used by this group. In addition, the teenagers usually saw other people play games such as draughts, monopoly, snooker, chess, table tennis, as well as taking part in drama activities and watching movies.

Although they did not mention it, participants in the youngest age group also knew that there were computer classes going on. All the other groups stated that there were computer classes and some of the participants were attending these classes. Many of the activities were mentioned by all the three groups in the age range of 18 years to 34 years, including computer classes, the radio station, the clinic, library, hall for recreational activities and a youth office. All the three groups said that the youth office provided career guidance, including help in job hunting such as the writing of curriculum vitae and interview techniques, training courses and job placements for the youth.

The 18-24 years male group and the 25-34 age groups mentioned that there was also 'Kelly Girl' available within the Centre for job placements. Other activities and services that were mentioned by these two groups were the rent office and Eskom for the purchase of electrical units, drama lessons, lifeskills courses and aerobics. In addition to these, the 25-34 years group stated lifeline counselling, church services and pension pay-outs.

The elderly group of 60+ years did not know much, as "we do not check what is happening". They only knew about and used the pension pay point, Eskom (though they did not mention this at first instance), the clinic, lifeline and the Alex FM radio station.

There was a relation between the mention of services and their actual use. This was especially the case for the youngest group, which focused more on 'entertainment activities', while the older groups were more concerned with services to shape their future.

### **Usefulness**

Generally, all the groups regarded the activities and services they mentioned as being useful and helpful. However, there were some negative comments about a few of the services as will be noted below.

As can be expected, judging from their lack of knowledge about Centre activities, the elderly group of 60+ years had little to say. Generally they were satisfied that they could receive pension close to their homes. However, at times they were mugged by youth next to the gates of the Centre. Moreover, they said the Centre was over-crowded with children, who inconvenienced them walking around.

### **The Library**

One young girl (in the 12-17 years group) said, "I like the library because I get information for completing my school assignments. This information helps me obtain high marks". The participants in this group echoed this sentiment by saying, "we like that there is a library because we learn", and "the library occupies us".

A problem with the library, especially for the 25–34 years age group, was lack of adequate information. One participant commented, “everything currently at the Centre is fine but they should improve the library service. One does not get enough information.” According to the participants, the range of books available at the library was very limited. Moreover, many of the books available were reported to contain inadequate information.

The 18–24 old female group raised concerns regarding library staff. They said that assistance at the library was very poor. The group claimed that the librarian did not know book categories, and as a result was unable to help them locate books in the library. According to this group, the library staff seemed to lack knowledge about library operations. This was noted in another statement that library users often get contradictory responses from different staff members as to book availability. One would order a book for the following week only to find the book was never available.

Another concern for the 18–24 years old female group was that “we go there everyday but they would trouble us at exam time”. That is, during the year nobody bothers to request identity cards from the users. It is only at exam time, and at a time that they are at their busiest, that users are asked for these. This appeared to inconvenience the users, especially during exam time.

### **Eskom**

The 18-24 years male group and the 25-34 years group noted how useful it was to have Eskom and the pay point for pensioners at the Centre. One said, “the Centre has brought these services nearer”. Another commented, “it has made life easier for the elderly who can now go and purchase electrical units themselves, without having to wait for their children to come home after school to send them, as was the case when this service was not provided for at the Centre and was far from the community”.

### **The Youth Office**

All the groups, especially the older ones who used it (18-34 years), hailed the youth office as “almost perfect”. It was said to provide “many useful services”, such as referrals to external training institutions, career counselling, lifeskills training, assistance with obtaining bursaries and job placements. One participant from the 25-34 years group said that they “feel empowered” after completing the training offered through the youth office. Even participants in the youngest age group who seldom, if ever, use the services of the youth office had this to say: “We don’t know anything about career guidance, all we know is that there is a youth office that organises employment for the youth”.

The participants went further to assess the activities and services provided by the youth office. The 25-34 years group found the referral training institutions to be

“good, as most people who attend at such institutions get employed afterwards. Moreover, we get to learn technical skills such as plumbing”.

Contrary to the apparent satisfaction with the training organised by the youth office, ‘after care’ service was reported as lacking. The shortcoming was stated by the 25–34 years group. One participant said, “the youth office provides training but eventually you need transport and lunch. Moreover, after training there is no ‘after care’ service”. This participant made an example that if one wanted to open a business there was no assistance from the youth office. “We cannot get loans because we don’t have sureties”, as one participant put it. Another participant reiterated this concern by mentioning, “after training I felt empowered but I still don’t know where and how I can use my training”.

It appears that the placements, which were arranged by the youth office after the training, depended on sheer luck. Some get placed, for example in carpentry and plumbing, one participant mentioned. Another said, “yes, it depends, I don’t know if it’s luck or what. Like myself, they call me if there is some casual work to do. So ‘after care’ is available for some and not for others”.

### **Career Counselling and Guidance**

The career counselling service was reported to cover job hunting hints, such as interview techniques, curriculum vitae writing, telephone manner, and so on. However, the discussions revealed that most of the participants were not utilising this service. The youngest group knew nothing about career guidance. They felt that it should begin with them early on, and not only “inform those at high school level”.

Surprisingly, participants in the male 18–24 years group were not utilising the service. The 18–24 years female group found the service useful as they learnt many things that they did not know before. The participants further mentioned that ‘Kelly Girl’ also provided career guidance, although none of them attended it. This could be because, according to the participants, those who attend ‘Kelly Girl’ are supposed to pay for the service, while at the youth office they are not.

The older group of 25–34 years raised a similar concern to that of the 12–17 years group, when they called for an extension of the service to those well beyond matric. Further, participants in that group did not really understand how the career guidance service operated.

### **Lifeskills training**

Participants mentioned three lifeskills training courses that were offered by the youth office. These were ‘Facing the Future with Courage’, ‘Self Esteem Enhancement’ and ‘People on Purpose’. Only two age groups attended these courses and they found them very useful. The 18–24 years male group maintained that most of those attending the training get employed after completing the courses. They said, “there is

no way one cannot get a job after attending these courses because even at the youth office they assist one”. One participant in the 25–34 years group said, “during these courses one gets to know what one wants in life”. Another one stated, “I’m happy that the Centre is there because we are poor and can get life training skills from there”. This implied that lifeskills training helped them find means of dealing with their poverty situation.

### **Placements**

The placement centre did not seem to offer much, and the participants had very little to say about it. The 25–34 years group simply mentioned that this centre offered computer courses, career guidance and job placements. The former two services are dealt with separately in this report. As for job placements, only the 18–24 years female group commented on the issue. They mentioned that for them it was not easy, as most of them lacked the work experience required before they could be placed.

### **Computer courses**

Only the 18-24 female group utilised the computer service at the Centre. They found the course useful, as it provided basic computer knowledge and skills. The group suggested that the service should also be offered to youth at school-going age, and not only to those who have completed matric, preferably in the afternoons. The same sentiment was expressed by participants in the youngest group, talking about the “need to be taught computers and typing”.

### **Lifeline counselling**

This service was not so popular, especially among the younger groups (12–34 years). Most participants only learnt about it during the discussions. Some of them expressed a need to utilise the service. Those who knew about it never used it. Participants in the 25-34 years group called for an extension of the service to include information on abuse, especially of children. More importantly, the teenagers expressed a need for such information. This issue is further dealt with under ‘additional services needed’.

The 60+ years group found the service useful, although they did not readily know where the office was situated. They were always referred to it from reception. Nevertheless, one said, “you walk out of there relieved”. Another one mentioned, “they even solve problems that you have at home”.

### **The Alex Clinic**

All the participants found the clinic to be very useful. However, there was wide dissatisfaction among the youth (18–34 years) with the service at the clinic. Participants said that staff at the clinic were too slow and that they usually took very

long lunches. They complained that the clinic was sometimes closed when it was supposed to be open. Further, they felt that it should also be open on weekends, as the community clinic is usually over-crowded.

The elderly had different views altogether. They found the clinic “good because if it’s closed elsewhere they’ll accept you at this clinic. At the Centre it is always open”. This discrepancy may be due to fact that the elderly normally use it when the clinic is open. They are not likely to visit at other times such as the evenings or early mornings. One of them also added, “they even have cars to take you to the main clinic”.

## **Additional activities needed**

### **Mixed group, 12–17 years**

The 12-17 years group called for a variety of recreational activities to be introduced at the Centre. Girls wanted dance classes while none of the boys opted for that. All the participants wanted to see more sports such as volleyball and athletics. In addition, girls wanted to have netball. The group also called for computer games to be introduced.

The teenagers further mentioned that they wanted to hear about crime prevention and motivation to refrain from crime. This would also involve information on what to do, whom to contact, and so on, in crime situations. This group further wanted to know more about identifying, preventing and reporting child abuse cases.

This group also wanted more educational activities at the Centre. They wanted to see educational movies and drama as well as educational tours. They wished for assistance with their school subjects, especially difficult ones, as well as assistance with their homework.

### **Females, 18–24 years**

This group generally appeared to be satisfied with the existing available services at the Alexsan Resource Centre. The only addition they were interested in was cooking and baking classes, in which they would like to participate. The participants in this category were more concerned with community awareness of the activities provided at the Centre.

### **Males, 18–24 years**

The male group would like to see more sporting activities at the Centre, such as boxing and volleyball. Further, the group wanted a multi-purpose indoor sports hall,



with different colour lines for each sporting code. They suggested that clubs for each sports code or game could be established and tournaments organised with other centres, institutions and communities. This group also raised a concern around people awareness of the activities provided by the Centre.

### **Mixed group, 25–34 years**

The 25–34 years group wanted training centres to be based at Alexsan. They were concerned about the inconvenience and cost of having to travel for training. They expressed a need for technical skills training to be provided at the Centre, in particular bricklaying, painting, building, catering, art, and sewing. The women participants said that they used to enjoy sewing classes when they were offered before, and would like to have them re-introduced.

Echoing the youngest group, this group recommended that the lifeline service be extended to teach about child abuse. They suggested role-play exercises of court proceedings for abused children. According to the group, this would make it easier for the children to relate their experience in court and allow justice to prevail. Children tend to be shy and fearful in court, and as a result cases get dismissed due to inadequate information.

The participants suggested that pilot projects be introduced to assist those who have undergone training and are still looking for employment. One of them said, “my concern is that youth get training but cannot find employment. The Centre can assist by providing equipment and materials and the youth can utilise their skills to initiate small business or pilot projects. Proceeds from such activity can then be shared between the participating individuals and the Centre.” Others, especially the females, were willing to venture into the catering business if the Centre could provide utensils such as glasses, plates and so on.

### **Mixed group, 60 years and above**

This group wanted entertainment and subsistence services. The former referred to tours and picnics for the elderly. The latter included food parcels, blankets and clothes and an old age home. They said there was one home on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, but it was too expensive.

The elderly group also called for knitting to be provided at the Centre so that they could go and spend time there. This activity should not only be for enjoyment but could also be used to supplement income: the users could knit jerseys for themselves and also sell the products and share the proceeds with the Centre. In addition, the elderly would welcome other income supplementing activities such as baking and selling, to be arranged by the Centre.

### **What other role should the Centre play?**

The participants were asked to indicate what other role in the community could the

Centre play. Only the 12–17 years group and the 18–24 years female groups said nothing about the issue. Participants in other groups stated that the Centre could act as a link between the community and local government, by working with the community to find out what are its needs, and conveying them to local government where appropriate. Another suggestion was the links be established with the Department of Labour to provide more training courses at the Centre. Such links were also suggested by the elderly group.

The participants also called for the Centre to focus on the needs of the youth, such as the use of the local stadium. The stadium could be opened up for children to play if linkages between the Centre and local government are established

Participants in the 25–34 years group suggested that the Centre should serve as an information centre. One of them said, “for example the Centre could provide information on Gauteng issues, detailing where one can get what service”. They said this could be some sort of a directory for the area.

### **Contribution by users**

Generally, the participants expressed willingness to contribute to sustaining the Centre, in exchange for the provision of good services. The elderly group were not prepared to contribute financially but rather through other means. The willingness by the other groups to make financial contributions should also be treated with caution. All of the groups were initially silent when the topic was first touched. They only affirmed their willingness after more probing for responses. The silence could mean that the participants were not fully prepared to make financial contributions, despite their claims of willingness to do so. At the same time, it is important to note the expressed willingness to pay for services.

### **Mixed group, 12–17 years**

Most of the participants in this group were willing to pay a joining fee for afternoon classes to assist them with school subjects, if these could be provided at the Centre. Some of them, however, said they could only pay if they were provided with books as well. The group was also prepared to pay for educational tours, the library service and computer courses.

All the participants were willing to assist with cleaning the Centre by sweeping floors and grounds, picking up papers and so on. They also mentioned that they could be involved in fund-raising activities, such as preparing boxes for donations by users, including themselves, and asking for donations from the wider community. The latter idea though, was qualified by the need to train children to avoid being lured into people’s houses where they could be sexually abused.

### **Females, 18–24 years**

The participants in this group were willing to pay if services were improved. Moreover, they stressed that fees should be reasonable, given that sponsors could be found. The services participants in this group were willing to pay for included aerobics, computers, cooking and baking classes, and the library.

The group mentioned fund-raising activities in which they could participate as a way of contributing to the Centre. These included shows and concerts for raising funds. There could be a Funday held at the Centre or the stadium, and the users could sell stuff for the benefit of the Centre. For instance, if there were cooking and baking classes, then “we can cook and bake and sell on Funday”. They said they would also contribute by attending the functions and buying stuff themselves. Interestingly, this group was not willing to do any cleaning because “there are municipal cleaners at the Centre, and once you start doing it you’ll end up being the only one doing it”.

### **Males, 18 – 24 years**

Participants in this group were willing to contribute to the Centre. They stated that payment (even renting) should be viewed as a maintenance measure rather than profit making. They, like their female counterparts, set conditions of ‘good service’ and ‘reasonable fees’. They acknowledged that the ‘Self Esteem Enhancement’ course was subsidised. The group also maintained that some programmes should be offered for free to keep up the ‘good image’ of the Centre, and allow other people who could not afford to pay for it to benefit as well.

The participants in this group also suggested fund-raising activities. They were willing to be involved in playing football and indoor sports and even pay admission fees to watch and participate. They also suggested going door-to-door to collect donations.

Other payment means they were prepared to consider were clean up campaigns, collecting bottles and cans for recycling (for the benefit of the Centre), and assistance with writing proposals for donor and subsidy applications.

### **Mixed group, 25–34 years**

Participants in the group showed willingness to contribute on certain conditions such as good service and ‘convenience’ or ‘reasonable pay’. They felt that payment could be introduced with due consideration to those who cannot afford it. The group also made other suggestions:

- Participants should be allowed to attend training for free and repay once they get employed.
- Users attend training, say for three months, and then do one or two months ‘production work’ for the Centre. That is, if one did carpentry, then one could make some chairs and tables for the Centre to use or sell.

- Cleaning around the Centre.
- Sewing, for example cushions, for the Centre to use and sell.
- Catering when there are events organised by the Centre (if the Centre provides catering training).

### **60 years and above**

This group was not willing to make any financial contribution. They said, “we earn so little money and we can’t afford to pay a thing there”. Nevertheless, the ‘oldies’ were prepared to make other types of contribution, including knitting and baking by women. However, the participants would like to share the proceeds with the Centre as they earned very little.

Most of the elderly participants could participate in ‘concerts by the elderly’, where they would sing and dance, etc, though some thought this would be very tiring. Most were also willing to carry cash boxes and ask for donations at strategic centres.

## **Other comments**

### **Operating Hours**

Operating hours were not a problem for the 12–17 years and the 18–24 years female groups. The 25–34 years and 18–24 years male groups had no problems with the general operating hours for the Centre as a whole. They mentioned though that the clinic’s opening and closing times were inconsistent. The 25–34 years group added that it would be good to have the clinic open during the weekends, as the community clinic is usually crowded. The group also stated that library times (said to close at 17h00) were “limited and cannot cater for night school attendants”.

The 18–24 years group complained about the times at Eskom for the purchase of electrical units: “At Eskom they open at 8h00 and close at 17h00 while some people only come home around 19h00”, said one participant.

### **Staff Attitude**

Two groups of participants complained about staff attitude at the Centre. Asked what they wanted the Centre to provide, a girl said, “we need kind service and good attitude”. This was further expressed in a participant’s (female, 18–24 years) statement that the attitude of staff should change for the better. These remarks resulted from dealings with staff, especially at the clinic, reception and library. Reception staff were also reported to refer people to wrong places at the Centre, either physically or

through the telephone.

In contrast, the 18–24 years males and 25–34 years groups said that staff attitude was positive. The former mentioned that staff attitude at the Centre had improved from the previous year. The participants in the two groups used words like ‘good service’, ‘friendly personnel’, ‘good and helpful’ and ‘sweet’ to describe Alexsan staff.

### **Marketing and public awareness**

It emerged from the discussions that many people were still unaware of the services and activities provided at the Alexsan Resource Centre. Although many activities taking place at the Centre were normally announced on Alex FM, it was not enough. Further, it appeared that the announcements were mainly for one-off events rather than for on-going services such as training, library, etc. A 18–24 years female participant said, “many people from Alex do not know what activities are provided at Sankopano. Even myself, I only discovered through a friend from Soweto.” A 25–34 year old participant said, “I thought it was simply a political centre and, since I do not want to be a politician I was not interested in visiting the Centre. It was only when I had to do voluntary work there that I realised this was more than just a political centre”.

On the basis of the indicated lack of awareness about activities at Alexsan Resource Centre, the participants were asked to suggest means of publicising and marketing the Centre. The following means to publicise the activities and services provided at the Centre. were mentioned:

- Continuous announcements on Alex FM and other national radio stations;
- Placing posters and pamphlets at strategic venues;
- Announcements over the car radio/loudspeaker;
- Employing a Public Relations Officer to take charge of marketing;
- Using tournaments with other institutions and communities to market the Centre.

### **Survey results**

As part of the evaluation of the Alexsan Resource Centre, C A S E undertook a snapshot survey of users of the Centre. The users were randomly approached as they went in or out of the Centre. The fieldworkers were instructed to balance gender and age as much as possible. Overall, 203 users were interviewed, 51% of whom were men and 49% women. The users’ age was concentrated within the range of 18 to 34 years, with more than four fifths (82%) of them falling into this age category. More than half (60%) of the respondents were either busy completing or have already completed a post-matric qualification. None of the respondents was without any education at all.

Most of the users visited the Centre everyday. More than a third (36%) of them claimed to be visiting it daily. There were no significant differences in the

numbers of men and women who visited the Centre on a daily basis. Slightly more than a tenth (12%) of the users visited the Centre about once a month.

### **Services most frequently used**

The respondents were asked to mention the three services that they used most frequently at the Centre. These appear in Table 1 underneath.

	<b>Library</b>	<b>Clinic</b>	<b>Eskom</b>	<b>Computer</b>	<b>Youth office</b>
Men	67	8	13	11	11
Women	46	39	24	24	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>

**Table 1: Most frequently used services**

The responses revealed that the library, clinic and Eskom were the most frequently used services. The library was the only service that more than half of the respondents (56%) used frequently. This could be attributed to the educational level and needs of the respondents, as well as the absence of adequate similar facilities in the township. Following the three services above were the computer studio (17%) and the youth office (13%).

Men tended to visit the library more frequently, with nearly two thirds (64%) of them doing that on a regular basis, as compared to less than half of the women (46%). Women respondents tended to use the other facilities, the clinic and Eskom, more frequently than men did (19% of the used the former facility and 24% the latter. The equivalent figures for men were 8% and 12% respectively).

### **Services least frequently used**

Despite the frequent use of the clinic and the library, many respondents did not use any of these services. When asked to rank the three services used least frequently, the clinic and the library rated third and fourth respectively out of more than ten services. The two least frequently used services were the tuck shop (mentioned by 30%) and the photocopy and fax services (mentioned by 24%).

### **What should be done with services?**

The respondents were then asked to state whether certain services provided by the Centre should be kept, extended or removed. All the specified services were popular in that most of the respondents either wanted them kept or extended. More than two thirds of the respondents, for each of the services, stated that these should be kept or extended. Given that very few respondents indicated that any of these services should be removed, a better of indication of lack of popularity is if people refrained from suggesting that the services be kept or extended.

	<b>Keep</b>	<b>Extend</b>	<b>Remove</b>
Library	77	122	0
Career Guidance	95	79	1
Computer Studio	85	89	2
Lifeline	121	25	0
Youth Office	97	75	2
Sports	77	100	0
Arts and Drama	93	81	3
Saturday School	89	49	2
Photocopy and Fax	115	82	0
Tuck Shop	156	46	1
Community Events	113	76	3

**Table 2: What should be done with these services**

The Saturday school and lifeline services were the least popular as they had 68% and 72%, respectively, of respondents who wanted them kept or extended. For all other services more than four fifths (80%) of respondents suggested these options. The library, photocopy and fax, tuck shop and community events received the support of more than 90% of the respondents, who opted for their maintenance or extension. Most of the remaining respondents did not know what should be done with the specified services, and very few wanted them removed.

### **Should the Centre provide these services?**

A number of services were mentioned and the respondents were asked whether the Centre should provide these. The services were training and education, health, legal services, communication, sports and culture (music, drama etc.).

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Training and Education	199	1
Health	198	2
Legal Services	174	16
Communication	194	1
Sports	200	2
Culture	192	4

**Table 3: Would you like the Centre to provide these services?**

Very high proportions of respondents wanted the Centre to provide these services (with only legal services receiving the support of less than 90% of respondents). It seems that as long as respondents do not have to choose between services or bear their

costs they have no objections to see the Centre providing additional facilities.

### **Should services re-locate to the Centre?**

Although the majority of respondents did not want any of the facilities that are located elsewhere in Alexandra to move to the Centre, a substantial number wanted that to happen. The most wanted facilities were a cinema; more sports codes (as in tennis, volleyball, boxing, netball, basketball, indoor soccer, weight-lifting and gymnastics); police station; dance, drama and music lessons, and a bank (auto-teller machine). There were no significant differences in the proportions of men and women who wanted these services to move to the Centre.

### **Willingness to pay for services**

The respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to pay for the services provided by the Centre. Slightly more than a tenth (11%) of the respondents showed no willingness to pay. These were evenly spread by gender. The rest of the respondents expressed willingness to pay, either in cash or in kind, or both. Payment in kind included paying by volunteering, contributing labour and donating material. Over a quarter of respondents (28%) were willing to pay in cash, 26% were willing to pay by volunteering, and the rest were willing to pay both in cash and in kind, or just in kind.

### **Overall evaluation**

In general, everyone acknowledged the good services provided by the Alexsan Resource Centre. They mentioned that the Centre was very useful to the community of Alexandra. Many respondents (42%) though, called for an extension of facilities. This meant extending and improving existing facilities as well as introducing new ones. The respondents specifically mentioned education facilities (including training centres and the library), the Internet and the clinic. They said that the library was too small, had a limited range of books and limited opening times.

Comments were made that security at the Centre was inadequate or non-existent. This was mentioned as a result of perceived criminal behaviour at the premises of the Centre. Furthermore, the respondents found many of the Centre rooms too small and wished that they could be extended.

Nearly a third (30%) of the respondents maintained that the Centre was 'perfect' and stated that it should 'continue to operate as it is'. Slightly more than a tenth (11%) of the respondents suggested that the Centre publicise all the available services to increase community awareness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the focus groups discussions and the survey, the following recommendations can be made:



- It emerged from the study that many of the Alexandra community members were still unaware of the activities and services provided by the Alexsan Resource Centre. A publicity campaign to increase awareness of the Centre is needed. The suggestions made by the participants in this report may be utilised, such as posters and pamphlets, media announcements, etc. As part of the strategy, the Centre could publicise previous activities and services that have been provided successfully.
- The Centre needs to insist on professionalism in the attitude and knowledge of staff. This would apply especially in the library, where staff were reported to lack knowledge regarding book categories and availability. Unprofessional conduct may dent the image of the services provided. The Centre could also hold meetings to influence other service organisations operating there to maintain a high professional standard. In the eyes of the community, all services and activities provided at the Centre belong to the Centre. This refers to the clinic specifically.
- The youth office should arrange follow-up programmes for students who complete their training. They need to be assisted in securing employment. This could be done thorough networking with employment agencies and other institutions to arrange for internship programmes. Some users were conscious that they lacked the required experience at work places. Internships could serve to deal with such problems.
- Further, the youth office should find means to assist those who intend to initiate their own projects. This could be done by linking with business and other relevant institutions, and requesting assistance for such individuals, whether in financial terms, skills training or other means.
- The career guidance service should be extended to include lower primary school pupils and post-matric students. The former need guidance to allow them to make choices when they have to. The latter may not have had the opportunity and it would be useful in giving them direction.
- Computers are an integral part of our working lives. The courses should be provided to all who require them, and not only to post-matric individuals.
- The Centre should also take note of the needs mentioned by the participants, relating to additional activities and the definition of the Centre's role.
- Finally, it is important to set up a monitoring mechanism to evaluate whether the Centre is achieving its objectives. Part of the process could be the introduction of regular meetings with users as well as installing suggestion boxes at points around the Centre and in the community.

It is hoped that this report manages to capture and provide the Centre with the necessary information on which to base the way forward for the Centre. The Alexsan Resource Centre is a very valuable resource for the community of Alexandra. Its development would be a meaningful 'gift' in improving the lives of these people.